

# Newsletter



Early Learning Initiative  
National College of Ireland

## CONGRATULATIONS *WELL DONE ALL!*

**You have lived through a year that has no parallel in modern times. Lot of things are still hard, but we have all adjusted and are moving on with our lives. Since January, home visits, parenting support groups and all our learning activities have all been online. New activities have been developed like the Zoom Ahead with Books Club, Stretch Family Card Challenge, Dads baby massage classes, self-care workshops, listening circles, English language cafes to name but a few.**



ELI would like to thank all our wonderful families and partners who faced the COVID challenge head on and upskilled themselves and their children to engage confidently in online educational activities.

Thank you to all the parents who sent us text messages, videos and phone calls telling us how well their children are doing and sharing their progress with us. Throughout the pandemic, we have seen how you supported your children to take their first steps, say their first words, draw their first scribble and read their first book. You have been amazing in encouraging your children to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills as well as learn how to play games and code. The creativity of your children was so evident in the amazing artwork made from some simple materials. Well done. A big clap to you from us.

ELI is a partnership with many people contributing to its success. It has been very encouraging to see the adults from all sectors of the community working together to proactively protect and support children. Thank you for continuing to work with us to ensure that children and young people continued to develop, learn and thrive during the pandemic. Sometimes we focus on the losses (and there have been many) but it is important to recognise what we have achieved and learned together, when so many of you went above and beyond for children and young people.

Thankfully we are on the other side with the summer and vaccines coming. Let's keep learning. Let's continue to try new ways of engaging families and enriching the home learning environment. At present, we are developing plans for STEM summer family learning programme as well as for the next academic year. Your support, as always, is much appreciated. Together we can continue to change children's lives through education.

## 0-2 PROGRAMME AND PARENT SUPPORT

Our 0-2 Home visitors put their best feet forward and can be seen around the streets and meeting up with families in the park. The children are enjoying feeling the grass, rubbing the trees, spending time listening to the birds, reading books and even doing crafts on park benches. The walk with parents to and from the park gives our home visitors time to listen to concerns parents may have and offer tips, hints and ideas.



## GROUPS

The last year has been full of challenges for everyone and we want to say a huge Well Done to all the parents and children attending our online groups and events for your resilience, courage and willingness to try something new. From babies, toddlers, preschoolers to older siblings joining in too; we have built our online Groups community & created a new learning environment. What we know for sure now is that learning can happen in many ways! We're so thankful to you for being a part of that. We love welcoming new families and look forward to the brighter days ahead; our Summer programme will run in July & August and we'll be sharing more information in the coming months. A recent quote:

"My oldest daughter was only 4 months old when she started going to the Mark's lane group and the Pearse library group, and now she is 4 years old!

Both my daughters enjoys songs & stories. it is a beautiful and useful resource for these difficult times where socialization is difficult.

I would also like to say that, taking into account that it is not easy to make a children's playgroup online, the people who lead both groups make it enjoyable and fun"



## PARENTCHILD+ PROGRAMME



The 12th March 2021 marked 1 year since Parent Child+ Dublin Dockland moved home visits online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, our programme families have adapted better than we could have ever imagined. Families now receive a regular delivery of their books and toys, as well as video call or socially distanced outdoor play sessions. Parental involvement in visits has increased since the pandemic began, with parents taking the lead in reading, talking and playing with their children. Given the recent closures of early years services and schools, the home learning environment has never been so important. We are incredibly proud of the dedication shown by programme families over the past year and look forward to the resumption of in-home visits.

## ZOOM AHEAD WITH BOOKS

Our Zoom Ahead with Books Virtual Book Club has been running on our social media with over 100 books and activities given away

to local families, as well as storytime videos by our wonderful volunteers. We have been so impressed with the enthusiasm and artworks shared with us. Our school based Zoom Ahead with Books has just finished and we look forward to seeing children's artwork on display across the community and online. Watch out for your local exhibition!





# ELI AFTERSCHOOL CODING CLUB

Our Coding Club is currently delivered virtually with a total of 18 children aged 10-12 years. This programme offers children the opportunity to explore robotic coding. It teaches children the different parts of robots such as the motor and main circuitboard. It also allows children to physically build their robots with tools provided.

If you are interesting in finding out more about this programme, please contact Julie Booth:

[julie.booth1@ncirl.ie](mailto:julie.booth1@ncirl.ie)  
or 086 466 6458



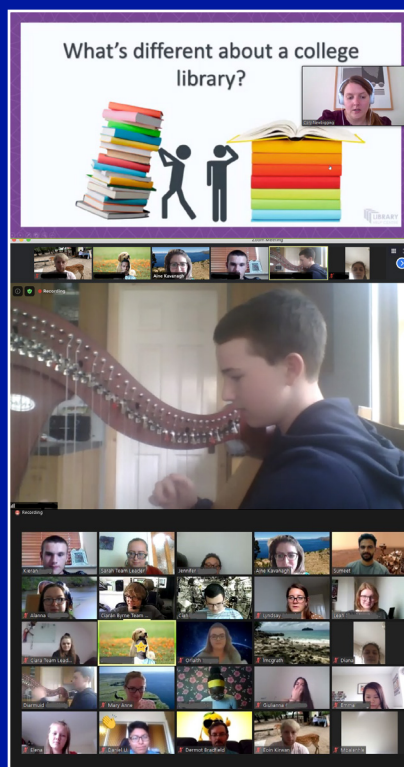
## GAMES BUDDIES



Our NCI Challenges (Stretch Graduate Home Learning Programme) is providing the opportunity to engage virtually, supporting parents participation in their children's education through delivery of blended learning at home. Our online card games have been a great success! Thank's to our wonderful volunteers known as the children's "Games Buddie" for their continous support and eagerness to join in with the children and families.

## VIRTUAL DISCOVER UNIVERSITY

Virtual DU is back!!! After the success of last year's online programme, we are running Virtual Discover University again this summer from Monday 21st to Friday 25th June 2021. Discover University is a summer programme that aims to give young people a taste of what college life is REALLY like. (Spoiler alert: it's great.) It's open to young people aged 14-17, living or going to school in Dublin city. Participants can choose one of four subject areas: Computing, Early Childhood Education and Care, Psychology or Business and attend lectures and complete projects in this subject area. As always, there will be lots of fun activities, workshops and guest speakers during the week, and participants will get the chance to win amazing prizes and meet like-minded people! Look out for the application form on our social media pages next month or contact [aine.kavanagh@ncirl.ie](mailto:aine.kavanagh@ncirl.ie) for more information.



## LISTENING CIRCLE

It's a tough year to be studying for your Leaving Cert! The Class of 2021 are the second year to undertake the biggest exam of their lives under the haze of a global pandemic. With the stress of a new format, missed school time and general uncertainty, it's no wonder our Leaving Certs are stressed. In light of this, ELI decided to hold a Listening Circle event for Leaving Certs in our local schools in February. A Listening Circle is a safe space where people can come online for an hour and chat about their feelings and experiences about a certain topic - in this case, studying for the Leaving Certificate during a pandemic. Everyone gets a chance to talk, while everyone else listens. Nobody has to talk, but the circle only finishes when everyone has felt listened to. Everything that's said in the circle is kept confidential. The students that attended said that they really enjoyed having the time and space to express their worries and concerns. ELI hope to run more listening circles this year and next, for young people and also their parents.

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICE - TEACHER TRAINING

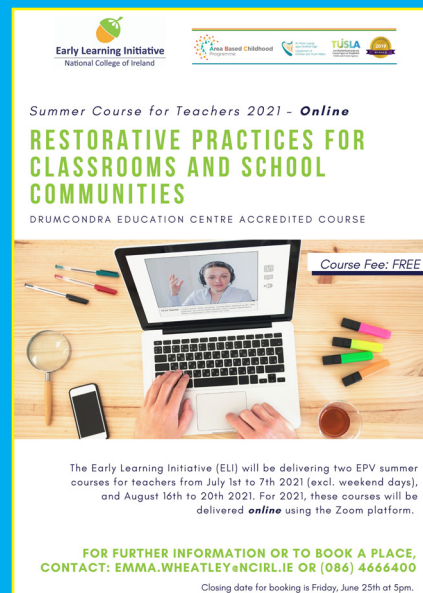
### Summer Courses for Teachers

ELI's long-running Drumcondra Education Centre Summer Course in Restorative Practice, for primary and post-primary teachers, contributes to the continuum of teachers' professional learning, promotes innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, and sets out to improve the learning experiences of teachers, and to ensure that their learning has a lasting impact on pupils' learning outcomes and experiences — ultimately creating happier, healthier school communities.

Summer courses will be delivered online during July and August in 2021, over five days, with 20 hours contact time, translating to three EPV days.

- July Summer Course: July 1st to 7th 2021 (excluding weekend days)
- August Summer Course: August 16th to 20th 2021

For more information or to register please contact [Emma.Wheatley@ncirl.ie](mailto:Emma.Wheatley@ncirl.ie)

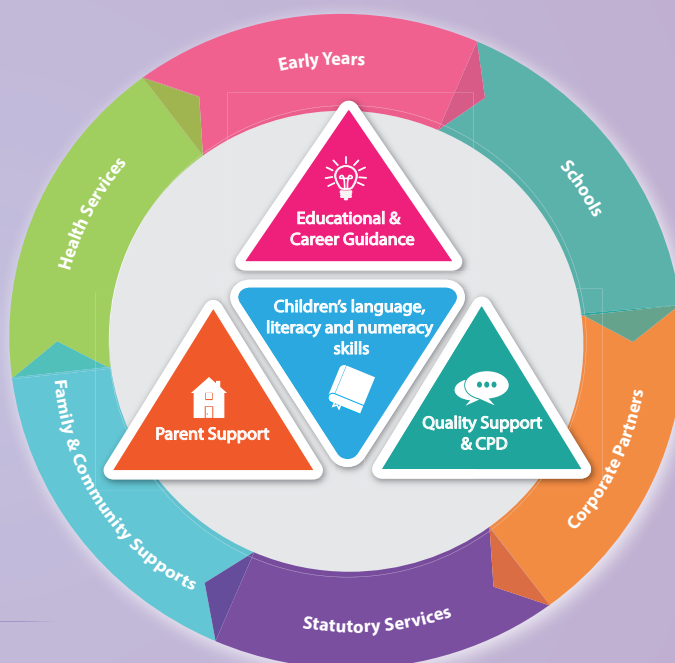


## VISION

Our long-term vision is that ELI will lead the way in providing first class educational support programmes within local communities, thereby enabling children, young people and their families to develop the dispositions, skills and knowledge needed to achieve their educational, career and life goals.

## MISSION

Working in partnership with Government and local communities to support educational journeys and achievements



## THANK YOU

Corporate, government and individual support is fundamental to our success. We wish to thank all of our socially minded corporate, government and individual supporters, including: Colin and Nikki Ryan, Joseph E. Corcoran and Keith Ennis, who play such an active role in the advancement of ELI.

